

# Russia to grant free scholarships in exchange for fishing access

By TAMBA JEAN-MATTHEW / Tuesday, December 11 2012 at 17:28

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A Japanese fishing trawler lying stranded off Cape Town in May this year. Russian trawlers have been fishing a lot in West African waters. Photo | FILE

The Russian government has expressed interest in undertaking big-scale fishing in the waters of several African countries in exchange for free university scholarships.

The Senegalese News Agency, quoted the Russian embassy, said the Russians, apart from giving the scholarships, would also provide vehicles, construction material and office equipment to selected African countries.

The targeted countries are Morocco, Mauritania, Senegal, Guinea-Bissau and Namibia.

The Association of Russian Fishermen currently operating in several West African countries was quoted as saying that the agreement would help them to “optimise” their catch.

The association reportedly seeks to attain 400,000 tonnes of fish - mainly sardines and mackerel - and in turn hand over \$160 million to the African countries.

The Russian offer comes at a time when many West African countries and particularly Senegal, are pushing out foreign fishing companies which have been flaunting fisheries regulations over the years.

Early this year, the international environmental watchdog Greenpeace disclosed that 44 giant Russian trawlers were massively exploiting fish resources within Senegal’s maritime territory and called for an immediate end to the practice.

The watchdog explained that the vessels had each the capacity of harvesting about 250 tonnes of fish per day and were “dangerously threatening to deplete the fisheries resources” in Senegalese waters.

Insiders said the Senegalese government has been losing over \$4 billion annually to illegal fishing.